



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 8, 2003

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MOSQUITOES POSITIVE FOR WESTERN EQUINE ENCEPHALITIS

Increased Surveillance in San Diego County Pays Off With Early Detection Of Virus

Mosquitoes from the Penasquitos Lagoon have tested positive for Western Equine Encephalitis (WEE), making this the first positive finding of WEE in San Diego county since 1972, officials from the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH) announced today.

Thanks to our enhanced surveillance and comprehensive control practices, we were able to detect WEE, said County Supervisor Pam Slater. "Western Equine Encephalitis is an illness similar to West Nile virus. This discovery does not mean there is cause for alarm; however, people should take appropriate precautions to prevent mosquito bites."

WEE is primarily an infection of wild birds and spread by the bite of mosquitoes carrying the virus. Most individuals who become infected with WEE do not show signs of illness. Of those who become ill, most develop mild illness, which includes flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, and body aches. Children, particularly those under one year of age, are more likely to become severely ill than adults. However, the risk of people becoming seriously ill from a mosquito infected with WEE is low. Symptoms usually appear 5-15 days after infection. If you suspect WEE or similar illness, please contact your health care provider for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Following are several common sense safety tips to protect residents and their communities:

- Eliminate standing water on residential property. Drain ponds and pools that are not circulating. Empty buckets and other standing water sources. Clean rain gutters.
- Install/repair screens on doors and windows to keep mosquitoes from entering homes and buildings.
- Wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors and avoid going outside at dawn/dusk when mosquitoes are the most active.
- Use mosquito fish to control mosquitoes in decorative pools and ponds. The County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health provides these fish at no charge.
- Consider applying insect repellents containing DEET, which are effective in keeping mosquitoes away; however, follow product instructions carefully and consult your doctor if you have questions or concerns.

To report mosquito-breeding areas or for specific questions about WEE or West Nile virus, contact the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health at 858.694.2888 or 1.800.551.INFO. Additional prevention tips and information are also available at www.SDFightTheBite.com

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